

WE CLAIM:

1. A retractable scalpel device comprising:

- (a) a cover housing with top and bottom edges and right and left sides along a length of the cover housing, the cover housing formed in substantially the shape of a surgical scalpel handle and defining a longitudinal sliding bore, the sliding bore having a blade opening defined in the cover housing at a forward end, a closed end at a rear end of the cover housing, and a slot extending through at least part of the left side of the cover housing;
- (b) a sliding piece comprising a forward section, on which is fixed a scalpel blade, a mid section, and a U-shaped legs section, where the mid section has a lateral extension through the slot and beyond the left side of the cover housing to form an actuator substantially wider than the slot adapted to permit a user to move the sliding piece in forward and rearward motion in the slot and within the sliding bore;
- (c) the legs section comprising a sliding section with lateral dimensions substantially wider and thicker than the mid section and adapted to slidably support the sliding piece in the sliding bore;
- (d) the legs section further comprising two flexible legs extending rearward from the sliding section, where a rearward part of the legs are urged apart from one another and have a releasable latching element urged against either a top or bottom surface of the sliding bore;
- (e) spring means for urging the sliding piece rearward so that in a rearward rest position the blade is covered by the cover housing and in a forward latched position the blade has passed through the blade opening and is exposed for surgical procedures; and
- (f) two releasable latch openings defined along opposite edges of the length of the cover housing and adapted to engage the releasable latching elements when a user moves the actuator in a forward direction to the forward latched position.

1 2. The device of claim 1 wherein the two releasable latch openings are located at  
2 about halfway along the length of the cover housing.

1 3. The device of claim 1 wherein the releasable latching means are adapted to prevent  
2 rearward travel of the sliding piece from the forward latched position if only one of the  
3 releasable latching elements are depressed so that it passes below an innermost edge  
4 of its releasable latch opening.

1 4. The device of claim 1 wherein the releasable latching means are adapted so that  
2 both releasable latching elements must be depressed so they pass below an innermost  
3 edge of a releasable latch opening to which the releasable latching element is engaged  
4 before spring means or actuator motion permits rearward travel of the sliding piece from  
5 the forward latched position.

1 5. The device of claim 1 wherein a permanent latch is adapted to permanently latch the  
2 sliding piece in one position along the length of the sliding bore.

1 6. The device of claim 5 wherein the permanent latch is adapted to latch the sliding  
2 piece into one position rearward of the rest position.

1 7. The device of claim 6 wherein the permanent latch comprises permanent latch  
2 extensions at each of the two legs and permanent latch receivers .

1 8. 1. A retractable scalpel device comprising:  
2 (a) a cover housing with top and bottom edges and right and left sides along a  
3 length of the cover housing and defining a longitudinal sliding bore, the sliding  
4 bore having a blade opening defined in the cover housing at a forward end,  
5 and a slot extending through at least part of the left side of the cover housing;

- 6 (b) a sliding piece comprising a forward section, on which is fixed a scalpel blade  
7 and a slider legs section, where the slider legs section has a lateral extension  
8 through the slot and beyond the left side of the cover housing to form an  
9 actuator adapted to permit a user to move the sliding piece in forward and  
10 rearward motion in the slot and within the sliding bore;
- 11 (c) the slider legs section comprising a sliding section with lateral dimensions  
12 adapted to slidably support the sliding piece in the sliding bore;
- 13 (d) the slider legs section further comprising two flexible legs extending rearward  
14 from the sliding section, where a rearward part of the legs are urged apart  
15 from one another and have a stepped extension urged against either a top or  
16 bottom surface of the sliding bore; and
- 17 (e) two releasable latch openings defined along opposite edges of the length of  
18 the cover housing and adapted to engage the stepped extension when a user  
19 moves the actuator in a forward direction to the forward latched position.

1 9. The device of claim 8 wherein the two releasable latch openings are located at  
2 about halfway along the length of the cover housing.

1 10. The device of claim 8 wherein stepped extensions are adapted to prevent rearward  
2 travel of the sliding piece from the forward latched position if only one of the releasable  
3 latching elements are depressed so that it passes below an innermost edge of its  
4 releasable latch opening.

1 11. The device of claim 8 wherein the stepped extensions are adapted so that both  
2 stepped extensions must be depressed so they pass below an innermost edge of a  
3 releasable latch opening to which the stepped extension is engaged before actuator  
4 motion permits rearward travel of the sliding piece from the forward latched position.

1 12. The device of claim 8 wherein a permanent latch is adapted to permanently latch  
2 the sliding piece in one position along the length of the sliding bore.

- 1 13. The device of claim 12 wherein the permanent latch is adapted to latch the sliding  
2 piece into one position rearward of the rest position.
- 1 14. The device of claim 13 wherein the permanent latch comprises permanent latch  
2 extensions at each of the two legs and permanent latch receivers.
- 1 15. The device of claim 8 wherein spring means urge the sliding piece rearward so that  
2 in a rearward rest position the blade is covered by the cover housing and in a forward  
3 latched position the blade has passed through the blade opening and is exposed for  
4 surgical procedures.